DIGITAL AND MEDIA DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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SOCIAL NETWORKS AND PUBLIC MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS IN 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

I worry that we're not getting enough of the news that we need to make informed judgments as citizens. (Walter Cronkite)

Modern broadcasting and online media are the main instruments that influence and form political and social realities. The article defines that the main peculiarity of 2019 presidential election campaign in Ukraine was the concentration of pre-election activity mainly in the media space: social networks and online media. An important influence on the coverage of this election campaign by media was made by public media organizations, which conducted appropriate monitoring. The conclusion was made, that suchlike control over the mass media proved to be an effective tool for preventing the use of negative information technologies. The constant informing of voters about the violation of legislation by candidates from public activists and representatives of state authorities can become an effective means to influence the candidates concerning the financing and use of political advertising.

Keywords: social networks, online publishing, election campaign, monitoring, public media organizations, media experts, information technology.

The nature and essence of particular eras of human existence determine the ways of information functioning. The "prophet of the electronic era" H. M. McLuhan called modern stage of society's development a "global village" as the natural audiovisual, multidimensional perception of the world and collectivity is reviving, however, they are based on a new electronic foundation. "If history begins from the invention of writing, then it ends with the invention of television". In "the era of the onset of consciousness", man is always under an aggressive stream of growing information, which causes a loss of analytical capacity. Virtuality becomes a reality thanks to mass media. Television paralyzes the consciousness, forms mass culture and eases manipulating of impersonal society for interested political forces. How truthful the predictions of H. M. McLuhan were, we can see in the example of modern Ukrainian socio-political realities, in which "really virtual, television" servants of the people move from the screens into real politics, having the chance to get parliamentary representation and even hold a presidential position».

In recent years, the global media context has significantly changed, with the spread of online media and the rapid growth of the social networks' role. It changes technological and social displacement influence of mass media on all democratic processes of decision-making. In the conditions of information society political power actively uses mass media, especially during the election period, as they are an integral part in informing citizens about the campaign's progress (starting with the registration of candidates, voters, and ending with the report on the final results), procedures, candidates, parties, and conduction of control as authorized government authorities, as well as public with observance of pre-election promotion rules. Therefore, the research based on modern media influence on the results of the presidential election campaign 2019 in Ukraine is relevant.

The theory of mass communication and its means in the underground system was developed by such foreign researchers as Theodor W. Adorno, R. Barthes, Z. Bauman, D. Bell, P. Bourdieu, J. Habermas, M. Horkheimer, W. Hunter, P. Lazarsfeld, H. Lasswell, D. McQuail, M. McLuhan, T. Peterson, F. Sibert, A. Toffler, W. Schramm, and others. Issues of interaction between the authorities and the media are covered

in the works of Ukrainian scholars: V. Zdoroveha, O. Kopylenko, B. Lyzanchuck, V. Mironchenko, A. Moskalenko, G. Pocheptsov, V. Rizun, A. Chichanovsky, V. Shklyar, V. Vorobyov, V. Popov, and others. The influence of mass media on the election process in Ukraine was studied by O. Chekmishev, I. Boychuk, L. Zinchenko-Apostolova, D. Dutsyk, O. Burmagin, E. Kuzmenko, O. Yurkov, S. Ostap, V. Tkachuk, and others.

Regarding media coverage of elections in Ukraine and providing the conduction of pre-election promotion facilities, special manuals for the press were published by I. Kulyas, R. Golovenko, I. Zemlyana "Mass media and elections. Self-regulation, safety, laws"[1]. S. Ostap, D. Dutsyk, Ye. Kuzmenko, V. Volodovska "Election coverage in Ukraine: Advice for journalists and editors"[2]; R. Kuzhel, A. Burmagin "Presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019, Ukraine, Monitoring Methodology for Mass Media", and others. The results of the election campaign were discussed at the conferences (e.g., National Media Talk), round tables (e.g., "Presidential election campaign in Ukrainian media"), and press conferences about media impact on election results in Ukraine, where media experts and journalists discussed quality of content, journalistic standards, professional challenges and media regulation. The next public organizations monitored the coverage of the presidential campaign in media: Commission on journalistic ethics, Platform of human rights, Ukrainian institute of media and communications, Stop Fake, Media Detector, the Institute of Mass Information, Civil network "Opora", Institute of Media Rights, etc.

One of the principles of the pre-election campaigning by mass media is the coverage of the election process based on objectivity, impartiality, and balance. However, this principle is very often violated, first of all, it might be explained by uneven access of various political forces to the media; secondly, particular television channels promote particular political forces; thirdly, the absence of independent, powerful media makes it impossible to fairly cover the election process. In this regard, we agree with I. Boychuk, who claimed that the saying "wins the one that has information" is transformed into "wins the one who can present the information in a better way"[3].

After all, while controlling the media(s), a politician imposes their political advertising and anti-advertising, which, as a rule, are not aimed at covering the true information. They show the "facts" that will only influence the consciousness of the citizens and help them to win. Such manipulation not only twists the citizens thinking but also tears up people's trust to transparency and objectivity of the election process. Sociological research proves that the majority of the Ukrainian population prioritize television and press as the sources of political information. Information, broadcasted by mass media without stopping, influences not only the needs and personal interests but also forms the motivation to certain political behavior, perceived by the population as their own. If we take the psychological impact on the population as 100%, the impact of mass media on their consciousness is 20%, and the subconscious is 80%[4].

In Ukrainian practice, media is more trusted than government authorities. The latest sociological surveys of the Razumkov Centre (March 2019) shows that 47% of respondents trust media, 31% – President, 26% – Government, 18% – Verkhovna Rada (the Supreme Council of Ukraine), 19% – Officials. Public organizations have got a sufficiently high level of trust – 46%, volunteers – 68%, church- 61% and Armed Forces of Ukraine – 61%[5].

The credit of trust to modern media makes them responsible for influencing the changes in value orientations, patterns of pre-development, sociocultural identities, political consciousness. As much as the media attach to the role of social institution, it depends on the level of the democratic transformation

[1] Куляс, І., Головенко, Р., Земляна, І. (2018). *ЗМІ та вибори. Саморегуляція, безпека, закони*. Київ, 100.

[2] Остапа, С., Дуцик Д., Кузьменко, Є., Володовська, В. (2019). *Висвітлення виборів в Україні: Порадник для журналістів та редакцій*. Київ, 32.

[3] Бойчук, І. (2013). Вплив засобів масової інформації (ЗМІ) на участь громадян України у виборчих кампаніях. *Держава і право: Збірник наукових праць. Юридичні і політичні науки*, *59*. Київ: Інститут держави і права ім. В.М. Корецького НАН України, 549.

[4] Ткачук, В. Інформаційний вплив на політичну свідомість в умовах глобалізації. *Social-science: Український науковий журнал: Університет «Україна», Всеукраїнська асоціація політичних наук (ВАПН)*, 224. <http://www.social-science.com.ua/jornal_content/411/political_psyhology> (2019, May, 10).

[5] Рівень довіри до суспільних інститутів та електоральні орієнтації громадян України (2019). *Центр Разумкова*. <http://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/riven-doviry-do-suspilnykh-instytutiv-ta-elektoralni-oriientatsii-gromadian-ukrainy-2> (2019, May, 14).

of society. The institutional social role is strongly emphasized and depends on the level of social and democratic development. In a democratic society, the audience is the tool that influences the productivity of media. In societies with an insufficient level of democracy, the media is subjected to either administrative or economic pressure and become propagandists and biased: the information advantageous to certain political forces and their investors is laid down into social consciousness. The information is backed up by repeated reproductions in the media. In the opinion of mass media researcher I. Boychuk, "the problem is that in modern Ukraine media is being developed as a social institute and as a business because they have to fight for the number of their audience. In addition, the legislation focuses on the provisions on media activities and journalists but, at the same time, attention paid to the lack of awareness of illegal media influences is not the same: the issue of the use of special mechanisms and/or tools for combating propaganda, sharing of deliberately created false information and other manipulations in the information sphere is not regulated. Electoral law doesn't regulate such issues either. The main regulatory requirement for TV product context is only an adaptation, so to say – translation and voicing it in Ukrainian"[1].

The ability to present the information in a way which gets the maximum advantage becomes a decisive action towards winning the election campaign. To reach the desirable result during the pre-election campaign, new political technologies, such as PR, TV-debates, stratagems, gray sociological PR, image-making, were widely used and implemented by both politicians and media controlled by them. This process hides one dangerous thing, which is imposing private ideals for the whole society. Mass media messages seek to achieve the effect, when, according to Y. Lotman, the composed information is "formed" in our heads and doesn't require deep understanding. Therefore, the growing stream of mass media messages can distract people's energy from an active part in the understanding of reality's transformation themselves and get them accustomed to passive knowledge[2].

Modern media along with "violence against the psychics" (showing violence, disasters) spread "violence against intelligence" based on low-quality television series and shows. The mass audience consumes information and does not comprehend it, that leads to the superficial imitation of "heroes" or the leveling of human relationships in "soap" series and tearful life stories[3]. And this forms the same perception of political information produced by television during election campaigns. Elections become a mass show, entertainment, and a sense of this is compounded by the fact that it often does not matter which political party or leader will win. Controlling the media, the politician imposes his political advertising and anti-advertising that will never show his true nature, but only what the voters need, only those "facts and comments" that contribute to victory. The danger of such manipulations is not only in twisting public opinion but also in the fact that the trust of citizens in the institutions of democracy, in general, is undermined[4].

"In the first elections in independent Ukraine where technologies were important and discussions were hard and harsh, Ukraine didn't leave the world's trends. Traditional forms of politics are disappearing and we face the same tendencies the countries of old democracy have already faced" – noticed O. Chekmyshev, the leader of monitoring organization of Foundation "Suspilnist" and Association "Suspilnyi Prostir". The conclusions of the expert were based on the conducted surveys. Thus, 70% of media experts and journalists believe that the topic of the election of the President of Ukraine was broadly, but poorly, covered by media. Citizens used the most information from television – 70% (31% of news, 27% of talk shows), Internet sites – 20%, social networks – 10%, to determine for whom to vote in elections. In addition, 54% of respondents noted that Russian propaganda influenced the coverage of the election, and 25% believed that it did not determine the information policy. Social networks (44%), Internet media (26%), television talk shows (18%) were the most exposed to Russian propaganda[5].

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[5] Тема виборів в ЗМІ висвітлювалась широко, але неякісно – експерти та журналісти (2019). *UACRISIS.ORG* <http://uacrisis.org/ua/71655-ukrainian-elections-in-mass-media> (2019, May, 15).

The biggest peculiarity of the 2019 presidential election campaign may be the concentration of pre-election activity in media space. Volodymyr Zelensky has used entertaining content, social networks and online media for his promotion campaign. Candidate, who had the highest ratings, ignored journalists, almost did not appear in the news and political discussion shows of Ukrainian TV (except for «1+1»). There are no legal norms in Ukraine that would regulate suchlike PR campaign and prohibit the demonstration of, for example, «Sluga Naroda» show ("Servant of the People") during the election campaign. Therefore, the social media got actively used as the place for promotion and spread of black PR as their popularity and number among users is constantly increasing. There was a struggle going on in informational space for the favor of voters and the struggle of compromises was taking place, which naturally led to an increase in the degree of tension. The growth of social networks' popularity led to the fact that they became an integral part of the election process. Such an instrument is used not only for informing the voters but also for distributing manipulative information because social media allows sharing the information absolutely free no matter whether it's true or not. The lack of real sanctions for violating electoral legislation in terms of political advertising, its imperfections, and the inconsistency of the actions of various state authorities creates a fruitful basis for increasing the number of "gynsa" (slang word that's used mainly in media community) in the media and violations of electoral law during promotion. Therefore, online publications don't bear responsibility for distributed content and reduce trust in the media[1].

Media expert, deputy of chief editor of Public Organization "Detector Media" S. Ostap noted that the reason for the increase of materials with the signs of order is the lack of a real Ukrainian media market: "We have a quasi-media market, there is no funding transparency: practically, every media survives, as it can, including appreciation for "gynsa". The other problem is excessive competition in the journalistic labor market in Ukraine[2].

Thus, according to the research of the Institute of Mass Information made in March 2019, "gynsa" and black PR were three times bigger than during the previous elections. The leader in ordering and placing political "gynsa" in his favor in online media was a candidate for presidency Y. Boyko: 16% of recorded cases, 14% of the materials related to Yulia Tymoshenko, 9% of the materials related to V. Zelensky, 6% – to P. Poroshenko. There were also 83% of materials with signs of black PR, directed against P. Poroshenko. In general, the largest number of political custom-made materials was recorded on the website Obozrevatel, 112-channel and the website of the TV-channel Newsone. During the second round (April), 27% and 10% of the materials had signs of being ordered and were in favor of presidential candidates V. Zelensky and P. Poroshenko accordingly; 71% related to anti-promotion of P. Poroshenko and 29% of V. Zelensky. In the regional media during this period, 9.8% of all materials about the presidential candidates had signs of a custom order, and 16% of the total "gynsa" was counter-campaigning against candidates[3].

Another Civil Network "Opora" also investigated the availability of printed image materials of potential candidates for the presidency of Ukraine and held a large-scale campaign to monitor the presidential elections. It was aimed at unbiased assessment of the preparation and holding of elections and prevention of violations.

System monitoring of media coverage of the presidential election campaign in Ukraine was conducted by a coalition of NGOs, including the "Journalism Ethics Commission", "Human Rights Platform", "Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute" and "Stop Fake" (Ukraine), supported by the Council of Europe projects: "Support for the electoral practices in the field of transparency, inclusiveness and integrity of Ukraine" and "Strengthening Freedom of Speech, Access to Information and Public Broadcasting System in Ukraine", which are being implemented within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine for 2018-2021.

The purpose of the monitoring was to provide a professional, complex and objective assessment of political diversity and balance in the coverage of news and current events on TV-channels and in online publications. Independent experts have held a quantitative and quality analysis that included holding

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[1] Івано-Франківщина напередодні виборів: тенденції виборчої кампанії та особливості дня голосування (2019). *Сайт Опора*. <https://oporaua.org/news/vybory/vybory-prezydenta/vybory-prezydenta-2019/17204> (2019, May, 21).

[2] Вибори близько. Експерти домовились спільно контролювати політичну рекламу кандидатів (2019). *Чесно*. <https://www.chesno.org/post/1280/> (2019, June, 04).

[3] Хто найбільше джинсував в інтернет-ЗМІ? (2019). *Моніторинговий звіт за 1–12 квітня 2019 року*. <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/khto-naybil-she-dzhynsuvav-v-internet-zmi-monitorynhovyy-zvit-za-1-12-kvitnia-2019-roku/> (2019, June, 11).

presidential elections and informing civil organizations about the electoral policies: on the objectivity and quality of their work, adherence to international standards and best practices regarding freedom of choice and media independence. The main task of the monitoring was to provide voters with evidence about whether the information provided by the media is sufficient to make the mindful choice[1].

Regarding this, the chairman of the "Journalism Ethics Commission" A. Kulikov paid attention to the importance of the observance of professional standards by journalists during the election: "The way people work in mass media communication influences the way people behave during the election, those who vote (or do not vote) determines our further common life"[2].

After the elections, a coalition of NGOs held a round table "Presidential Election Campaign in the Ukrainian Media," where media experts noted that "during the 2019 presidential elections, Ukrainian voters were in a crowded informational field due to the increase in the number and variety of communication channels that weren't used in previous election campaigns. The traditional media (television, press, online publishing) was joined by social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube), various instant messengers, and the growing importance of opinion leaders and bloggers, who used the new media to promote own political point, and, consequently, support the others. Despite the positive development of a diverse media environment, voters have found it very difficult to navigate in a large amount of information. Private media remained under the powerful influence of their owners and openly all campaigns demonstrated the commitment to specific candidates and political actors. Public broadcasting ("UA: Pershyi") has paid little attention to electoral subjects. For the first time in Ukraine in the second round, it was social networks that influenced the outcome of the election, this was due to the communication strategy of the candidate V. Zelensky. The role of media was reduced to highlighting what was happening in social networks, while the other focused attention on the show-component of the race, which resulted in the loss of its meaningful part[3].

"These elections were held under the current oligarchic media system, the lack of a strong social broadcaster, and the growing role of new media. The feature of this campaign is in a significantly big number of political talk shows and election marathons", – summed up D. Dutsyk, media expert, executive director of Public Organization "Ukrainian Institute of Media and Communications"[4].

The fact that modern traditional media is in crisis, as well as traditional institutions, was also noted by media experts at the final conference "National Media Talk": "Media should be highly professional, accurate, and impartial in covering events, otherwise they will simply not be able to fulfill their duty to society. However, high-quality journalism during the electoral process was replaced by entertainment content and became the main tool in the fight for the audience in the 2019 presidential election campaign. Media has lost the role of a monopoly mediator between content makers and consumers".

Experts based their thoughts during the conference on own sociological surveys: 73,3 % of respondents believe that the choice of citizens was influenced by the movie "Sluga Narodu" ("Servant of the People") and television entertainment content with the participation of "Kvartal 95", and 26.3% acknowledged the influence of the new methods of political communication through social networks; 60.5% stated that the main source of news for them was online media, for 34.2% – social networks, while the rest used traditional media; 76.3% believed that social networks played the role of the media, and only 34.2% were watching TV. It is important that 72.2% of the respondents cease to trust the media due to negativity and misinformation, so the same number believes that high-quality news should be prompt and full of information[5].

[1] Кужель, Р., Бурмагін, О. (2019). Президентські і парламентські вибори 2019. Україна. *Методологія Моніторингу ЗМІ*. <http://www.cje.org.ua/sites/default/files/library/FIN_UKR_Media%20Monitoring%20Methodology_Ukraine.pdf> (2019, June, 14).

[2] Підсумки моніторингу висвітлення в медіа президентських перегонів в Україні (2019). *CJE.ORG.UA* <http://www.cje.org.ua/ua/novyny_monitoryngu/pidsumky-monitoryngu-vysvitlennya-v-media-prezydentskyh-peregoniv-v-ukrayini> (2019, June, 19).

[3] Бурмагін, О., Дуцик, Д., Кужель, Р., Кузьменко, Є., Юркова, О. (2019). Підсумковий звіт за результатами незалежного моніторингу висвітлення в медіа президентської виборчої кампанії в Україні. Київ, 51. *CJE.ORG.UA* <http://www.cje.org.ua/sites/default/files/Підсумковий%20звіт%20final.pdf> (2019, June, 20).

[4] Підсумки моніторингу висвітлення в медіа президентських перегонів в Україні (2019).*CJE.ORG.UA* <http://www.cje.org.ua/ua/novyny_monitoryngu/pidsumky-monitoryngu-vysvitlennya-v-media-prezydentskyh-peregoniv-v-ukrayini> (2019, June, 24).

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Generally, the experts said that "not media won the election, but the TV, so to say the oligarchic channel «1+1» and image of President Goloborodko made in the series "Servant of the People" ("Sluga Narodu"). Entertainment won: people were watching TV and had completely different ideas about the candidate". Ilko Kucheriv, the Head of "Democratic Initiative" Fund, sociologist I. Bekeshkina, noted that "the influence of television is natural, and the choice of Ukrainians is quite understandable: people chose the one who was the most promoted in the media"[1]. Thus, the presidential election campaign of 2019 played an important role in the creation and spreading of an image of individuals (image-making), the media created the image of politician attractive to the voters, which in the majority did not correspond to reality, and is actively used for PR.

Another opinion was expressed by a well-known Ukrainian sociologist Ye. Holovakha, Doctor of Philosophy: "Goloborodko didn't even help the popularity of V. Zelensky but his cruel satire and mockery of the politic world did. Many Ukrainians liked it. The main thing that bothers them is the unfairness in society. They have got strong offense at the current political elite. It's a sign to change the country. The important thing is that the phenomenon of V. Zelensky is a kind of "electoral Maidan" that citizens try to change the system and political elite. V. Zelensky was considered to be the alternative to the authorities the citizens just do not want to perceive"[2].

Georgii Pocheptsov, an expert on information policy and communication technologies, explains the phenomenon of the election of President V. Zelensky with his theory of "free time". In the industrial age, people received, in addition to their working hours, time for leisure where emotions are important. Free time is a time of happiness because during leisure people can do their favorite business, and during work, it's always tense and thinking is constantly working. It was the on-screen communications that generated two places where a person feels most comfortable and happy: it's television series and social media. Today, television and social networks fill the free time of many people. When a person spends a lot of time in a virtual world, then she/he takes a lot of emotions and information from there. Everyone wants more leisure, so there is a desire to transfer happiness from virtuality to reality. From the virtual world, you can even influence the political preferences of the audience. This way, the world of leisure was transferred to politics. V. Zelensky is the hero of free time, time of entertainment. He came up just when there was a need. Such a hero is never busy with work – he does not do anything: he does not build bridges, houses or factories. His main weapon is a smile that brings more smiles. The hero of free time is a lifeguard, not a builder, a comic man, he has supernatural abilities, so he immediately "will stop the war and solve all problems in the state"[3]. But real life and real politics are other things.

Conclusions. Thus, the research of public organizations shows: news journalism during the election campaign was weak; the mass media did not help society to understand the pre-election situation, candidate programs; the audience received predominantly positive or public/hidden advertising; the media worked for the benefit of their owners, and the regional media acted as statisticians, avoiding analysts, expert assessments, research, etc.

In the current social and political situation in Ukraine, configuration of power may depend on information technologies and provocations that hold media and journalists' responsible and give serious challenges to non-governmental organizations to detect and prevent such phenomena. The control of their activities by public organizations was effective during the coverage of the electoral process by the media since the political authorities do not have such powers. Media monitoring is an effective tool for bringing to justice of those who should be controllers and observers.

Also, the constant informing of voters about the violation of legislation by candidates made by public activists and representatives of state authorities may be an effective means to influence the candidates regarding the financing and use of political advertising (in conditions of imperfect electoral legislation on political advertising), "gynsa", and pocket media. It has to operate during the election campaign because voters may decide for whom to vote, grounding their decision on the political promotion during the election period and whether that was fair and honest promotion.

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